# Preliminary Seasonal Assessment for Eastern Great Basin
# 2006 Fire Season

## Executive Summary

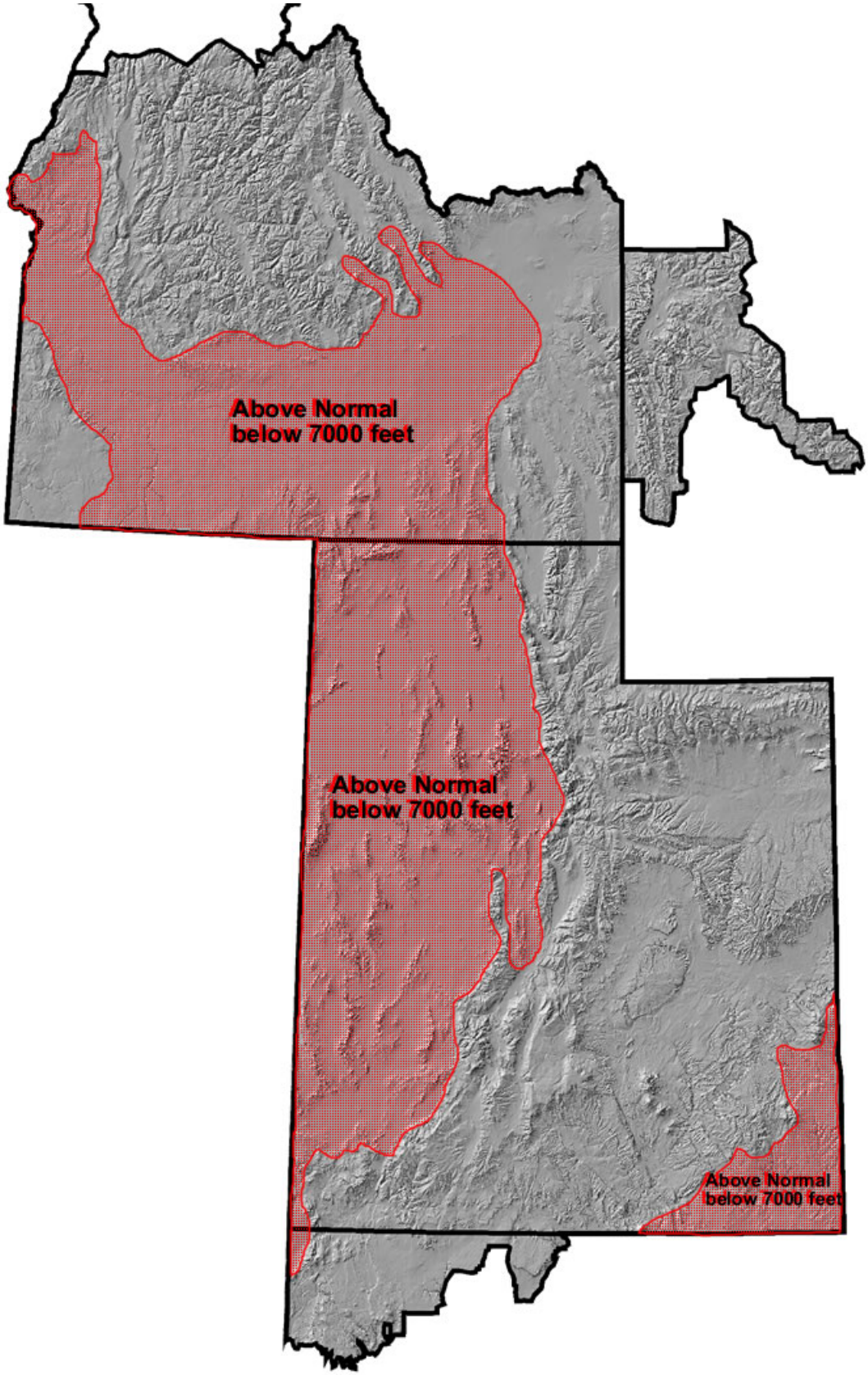
Above normal precipitation over the last two years has largely eliminated drought conditions in the Great Basin, with the exception of abnormally dry conditions in southeastern Utah. Snowfall in grasslands of western Utah and southern Idaho flattened some of last year's grass crop but left a significant amount standing. Lack of snowfall in southeastern Utah did little to flatten any of the carryover fine fuels. Wet conditions in March and early April coupled with a relatively warm winter will allow new grass crops to add to fine fuel loadings. Winter snowpack across Idaho, northern and central Utah was above normal. Southern Utah mountains were well below normal until heavy snows in March raised snowpack levels to around 75 percent of normal. This snowpack will likely melt quickly, allowing larger fuels to dry earlier than normal in the extreme southern Utah mountains.

**For Eastern Great Basin**, it is not likely that fine fuel loadings in southern Idaho and western Utah will reach the near record levels of 2005 but they will contribute to an increase in fire potential once again. Drought stress in sage and pinyon-juniper along with higher fine fuel loadings in southeastern Utah will contribute to fire activity. Low snowpack in the southern Utah mountains should contribute to an increase in fire activity over last year when large fuels remained wet from near record snows. **Consequently, the 2006 fire potential is forecast to be above normal across most of the grasslands below 7000 feet in western and southeastern Utah and the central and lower Snake River Plain in Idaho.**
**Management implications**.

Management implications for Eastern Great Basin include:

- Prescribed fire operations this spring in the southeastern Utah, the West Deserts of Utah and the central Snake River Plain of Idaho where carryover fine fuels were not flattened by snow could benefit from emerging new crop of grasses which will help reduce fire activity. However, a dry, windy period could cause control problems carryover fuels even during green-up.
- Active grassland wildfire season once fine fuels are cured will challenge initial attack resources.
- Likely increase in timber fire in far southern Utah after a relatively inactive season in 2005 may create a strain on resources if coincident with an active grassland fire season.

This assessment will be updated by early June, 2006.


Above Normal
below 7000 feet
Above Normal
below 7000 feet
Above Normal
below 7000 feet